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Reports Raise Question Of How Guevara Died

From News Dispatches

LA PAZ, Oct. 12 — A doctor's report that Ernesto Che Guevara was shot in the heart raised questions today about the army's accounts of how the guerrilla leader met his death.

A military communique said Guevara was wounded in a battle Sunday and died Monday. But some officers questioned whether Guevara could have lived about 24 hours with a bullet hole in the heart.

Gen. Alfredo Ovando Candia had told reporters that Guevara "identified himself and admitted having failed." But Col. Joaquin Zenteno, commander of troops that fought the guerrillas, said "Guevara was unable to say anything."

Absence of a definitive Bolivian statement on the hour, form and site in which Gue-

vara was slain, as well as details of his death, has led to considerable speculation.

Reports of Beating

Unconfirmed allegations said Guevara was captured wounded but alive and interrogated before his death 24 hours later and that he was beaten after his capture and summarily executed.

No responsible source has been found to confirm any of these versions. Col. Zenteno told United Press International that Guevara died instantly from his wounds.

According to Associated Press, the doctor who examined the body told reporters today that seven bullets had struck Guevara and one went through the heart. Photographs showed the hole near the heart.

Medical reports quoted by United Press International

said at least 11 bullet wounds — eight in the legs just below the knees, one in the groin and two in the chest—and that all were in the front. The reports said bruises were found on Guevara's back, but there was no explanation for them. It was suggested that the back contusions may have been suffered when the body was dragged along the ground to the place where it was picked up by a helicopter.

Reporters at the battle scene who wanted to interview some of the soldiers involved were told the men were in the field chasing survivors of the guerrilla force.

Brother Arrives

Roberto Guevara, respected attorney and brother of Che, flew into Bolivia from Argentina to confirm the slaying for the family.

There was no immediate indication whether the government would accede to the younger Guevara's request for an exhumation of the corpse, buried Tuesday night. President Rene Barrientos said that his government would "respect the corpse, and not permit it to be profaned."

In Washington, Secretary of State Dean Rusk told a news conference that he had "no reason to doubt" the Bolivian government's report of Guevara's death. He added that he was "proceeding" on that basis.

[There was still no official comment from Havana, although the Cuban government's press continued massive coverage of foreign news agency reports from Bolivia.]